

**REMARKS**

Claims 2-6 and 15 are all the claims pending in the application. As previously indicated in the Response filed on April 30, 2004, Applicant's representatives thank the Examiner for discussing this case on April 27, 2004. As was pointed out in the previous Amendment, the Applicant was previously unavailable to approve of the amendment to claim 2 which was discussed during the April 27<sup>th</sup> Examiner interview. However, the Applicant has since agreed to amend claim 2, as indicated herein.

**§102(b) Rejections (JP '201) - Claims 2 and 15)**

As indicated herein, Applicant amends claim 2<sup>1</sup>, and submits that JP '201 does not teach or suggest at least "wherein said both end portions of the cylindrical core proximal portion of the laminate are at least one of a size, shape, and dimension that is different from a remainder thereof such that said both end portions have a lower rigidity than that of the remainder thereof." That is, nowhere does JP '201 even mention the above quoted limitation.

Applicant submits that dependent claim 15 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency of independent claim 2.

**§102(b) Rejections (Adachi) - Claims 2 and 15)**

With respect to independent claim 2, Applicant submits that this claim is patentable over Adachi for reasons similar to those set forth above with respect to JP '201. Applicant submits

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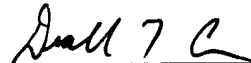
<sup>1</sup> Applicant submits that this amendment should be entered, as it does not require further search and/or consideration.

that dependent claim 15 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency from independent claim 2.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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